

A Better High Priest

- 1 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.
- 2 He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.
- 3 Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.
- 4 And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.
- 5 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";
- 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."
- 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.
- 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.
- 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,
- 10 being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:1-1

Religious Elites

EVERY CULTURE HAS ITS ELITES. American culture is no different. Technically speaking, “Elites are those who have vastly disproportionate access to or control over a social resource.”¹ When an elite has access or control over one area of social life, it can result in advantages in others. Think about a famous Hollywood actor, for example, taking up some social cause. As we all know, there is no such thing as the following acceptance speech, “I don’t really want to use the power of my celebrity to talk about anything more important, so thanks for this award, and BYE.”² There is no such thing as a celebrity without a cause. That is the transference of influence from one arena to another. This is what it means to be “elite.”

There are all kinds of elites. **Economic elites** have money or control over the economy. **Political elites** have great

¹ Shamus Khan, “Elites,” Oxford Bibliographies, July 27, 2011, last accessed 1-12-2015. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0017.xml>

² From a New Yorker cartoon, April 12, 1993.

influence within the state. **Cultural elites** can change social tastes and cultural morals. **Knowledge elites** control the flow of information in a society. **Social elites** have personal ties with elites from other categories and can thus influence other elites!³ Are there **religious elites**? I certainly think so. But let's pursue this idea of elites just a bit more.

It seems to me that there is usually **a long process for rising to elite status** and it often works like this. Someone from a modest background gains some kind of fortune and/or fame: They create something called Facebook, they land a part in Star Wars, or one day their out "shootin' at some food when up from the ground come a bubblin' crude." After a while, sometimes with the individual, sometimes over generations with children, power is collected, money become obscene, and people lose touch with where they came from (unless, perhaps, their name is Jed). Here's the point I want to make. It isn't the money *per se*. It isn't the power *per se*. What makes an Elite "elite" in my book is that **they lose touch with the reality of the everyday man** so that they no longer relate and often end up

³ Khan, *ibid.*

doing things that hurt them in one way or another because they have lost touch with reality.

So let me return to this question of the religious elite. Is there such a thing? Let's ask **Kenneth Copeland** and **Jesse Duplantis** who on their weekly TV show a few weeks back spent the episode telling everyone how hard life as multimillionaire celebrities is because everyone wants a piece of them, how it gets so very hard to always be there for everyone, and what a blessing from God is has been for them to have their own fleet of jet airplanes so that they can get some much deserved peace and quiet. This is pure elitism. We could do this with all kinds of religious elites throughout history, including of course the secret societies that control earth (just kidding ... *or am I?*). But let's bring this down to the world of the Bible and our passage today. Listen to this description of the High Priest from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. The following is written under the category of "his powers."

The high priest was expected to be superior to all other priests in physique, in wisdom, in dignity, and in material wealth; if he was poor his brother priests contributed to

make him rich (Yoma 18a; “Yad,” l.c. v. 1); but none of these conditions was indispensable. The high priest was required to be mindful of his honor. He might not mingle with the common people ... (Tosef., Sanh. Iv.; “Yad,” l.c. vs. 3). He might not participate in a public banquet, but he might pay a visit of consolation to mourners, though even then his dignity was guarded by prescribed etiquette (Sanh. 18-19; “Yad,” l.c. v. 4).⁴

This sounds pretty elitist.

This is not how it always was, of course. The high priesthood began in Israel with Aaron the brother of Moses. Aaron, of course, was the brother of Moses. He was also the great-grandson of Levi whose descendants would later become the Levites and priests. We don't know a lot about Aaron in those early years. The *JE* says this, “While Moses was receiving his education at the Egyptian court and during his exile among the Midianites, Aaron and his sister remained with their kinsmen in the eastern border-land of Egypt. Here he gained a name for eloquent and persuasive

⁴ Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 12 Volumes (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 391.

speech; so that when the time came for the demand upon PHARAOH to release Israel from captivity, Aaron became his brother's *nabi*, or spokesman.”⁵ So apparently at least as far as Aaron is concerned, he was of fairly humble origins and he began to rise in the community to some degree or another because of his gifts of oratory. Speaking for God to the people and to Pharaoh would also have been a position of prominence, and then being given the priesthood would have been a huge privilege and status. Aaron was a man making his way to elite status if you will.

But throughout the story of the Exodus, Aaron is constantly humbled by God. He is not allowed to lose touch with his kin and become an elite in the sense I have given. One of many stories in which this happens is when his two oldest sons are burnt to a crisp for offering unacceptable fire in the tabernacle, even though they were priests. This humbled Aaron greatly, but also his two younger sons Eleazar and Ithamar. This continued with his grandson Phinehas, who seems quite the regular guy when who, in an act of zeal for holiness, obeys God who then causes the

⁵ Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 12 Volumes (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 2.

priesthood to go through his line. Add to this the various regulations in the law, forcing them to mingle with the people, that prevent the Levites from owning land, and seemingly from getting rich, etc., and you have a priesthood that on paper at least was the opposite of elitism. So whatever it had become in later years it was nothing like that at the beginning.

Someone pointed out to me last week after bringing up another priest who shows up in our passage today (Melchizedek), this elitism of the later priesthood could also be something in the back of the mind of the Apostle who wrote Hebrews when it starts to explain who Jesus is as a high priest. How do you suppose that someone like **Annas** or **Caiphas** (two of the high priests in NT times) would have related to the people? Annas was incredibly powerful. He held the priesthood either himself or through his five sons and one son-in-law Caiphas for nearly 70 years! Being ultra rich, incredibly powerful elites, Do you think they would “**sympathize with weaknesses?**” (**Heb 4:15**). Do you think they would have “**dealt gently**” with ignorant and wayward people (**5:2**)? Would they have been powerfully in touch with their own need for a sacrifice for their own sins (**5:3**)?

Would they have been highly attuned to the life of suffering that was mandatory for the priest to have (7-8)? Honestly, it is rare to find elites like this in our own day. What makes us think it would be much different so long ago?

A Better High Priest

His Sacrifice for Sin

The passage today reflects the opposite of religious elitism. And how amazing is this, since if anyone could or should have been an elite among men it was God in the flesh. It moves now into a full-steam-ahead discussion of Jesus as a better high priest, which began in earnest in the last three verses of the previous chapter. **Hebrews 5:1-10** is a unit that forms the familiar “chiasm” structure.

A	The old office of high priest	(v. 1)
B	The sacrifice offered by the high priest	(v. 1)
C	The weakness of the high priest	(vv. 2–3)
	D The appointment of the high priest	(v. 4)
	D' The appointment of Christ, the new priest	(vv. 5–6)
C'	The suffering of the new priest	(vv. 7–8)
B'	The sacrificial provision of the new priest	(v. 9)
A'	The new office of high priest	(v. 10)

These structures were helpful **memorization devices** because of their repetition of themes. But they also served the purpose of **highlighting a central point** of the author. One commentary explains of this chiasm, “**At the very least ... There are two general qualifications which every high priest must meet: (1) ability to sympathize with those whom he represents, and (2) appointment to the office by God. These are given in this order in vv. 1–4 and then are applied to Jesus in inverse order in vv. 5–10.**”⁶ The chiasm begins, however, with the idea of **sacrifice**. As we look at this, I will move topic by topic to the central point of the passage. As we do this we will see how the new high priest is greater and better than any of the older high priests of Israel. And since he is better, he is able to be the Final High Priest anyone in the world will ever need for any reason in this life or the next.

Why would you need a high priest in the first place? It is because you are sinful and you need someone to represent you before God. If you do not have this, then God cannot

⁶ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 313–314.

look upon you with favor. God is holy and he cannot stand in the midst of wickedness. The Priest is the one who **offers a sacrifice for your sin** so that you may approach God. The Priest is the one who **offers prayers on your behalf** so that God may hear you. The Priest is the one who **pleads your case before heaven**, so that you might not be destroyed. These are the terrible implications of sin, but God has provided a way through this Priest where he might overcome your sin so that you might be saved, as it says, so that there might be “**eternal salvation to all who obey him**” (**Heb 5:9**). Being eternally lost and miserable and damned is something that in Christ, God has overcome.

Vs. 1 begins that every high priest is **chosen from among men**. This is the flip side of what will become the central part of the text. It is the first thing that comes in the actual command to make Aaron a priest. “**Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests-- Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar**” (**Ex 28:1**). The priest is **a man among men**, not a man among elites. This is the opposite of the elitism I was talking about. Why?

Two reasons are given. **The first** is that Jesus is a man

without sin. In being one of us rather but without sin, rather than some elite who pretends he is without sin, his sacrifice is better. He is appointed **to act on behalf of men in relation to God**. This is God's provision of grace for sinful people. This is that upward intercessory work we spoke about last time. Priests represent men to God. They are the go-betweens who deflect God's wrath in the midst of sinful people. The primary way that they do this is by **offering sacrifices for sins** (1). However, the high priests of the OT had a very big problem. They were sinners just like the others. They were chosen from among the others who were sinners. But they too were sinners.

Therefore, "**he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people**" (3). This comes from the OT law as well. On the day of atonement, "**Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house**" (Lev 16:11). Obviously, this created a problem. If the high priest is himself sinful, how can his offering be acceptable to God? How can he represent the people and offer intercession for their sins when he has his own sins to worry about?

People may not stop to think about this question, but it

is vital to salvation. The biblical answer is that he wasn't. However, God did accept the sacrifices that he offered. Why? Romans explains that God overlooked the “because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins” (Rom 3:25). Divine forbearance means that God was looking forward to something in the future, something that would allow him to actually forgive sins. Animal sacrifices by sinful priests simply couldn't do this. “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4). Yet, they foreshadowed what was coming and so God overlooked sin.

This is why Hebrews has already talked about Christ's sacrifice as being better, and why it will talk about it much more in the same way. In our passage, the way it tells us that the sacrifice is better it by contrasting the high priest as a sinner with Jesus who was “being made perfect” (5:9) or as it started this off in the last chapter “... yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

In a poll conducted by Barna a question was asked. This was his reflection on the answer. “Perhaps reflective of their questions about Jesus' divinity, Americans are conflicted on whether Jesus committed sins during his earthly life. About

half of Americans agree, either strongly or somewhat, that while he lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins like other people (52%). Just less than half disagree, either strongly or somewhat, that Jesus committed sins while on earth (46%), and 2 percent aren't sure.”⁷ The numbers don't actually differ much with age either. This shows that either 1. People aren't being taught the Bible or 2. People don't believe the Bible. Whatever the case is, the Bible is clear. Jesus is without sin and if he is not, then he is not a better high priest and his sacrifice is just the same as theirs. Therefore, we remain in our sins and there is no real forgiveness from God. The whole of the NT would be a lie from hell. High stakes indeed.

So it says that he was “being made perfect.” What do we do with that? The verb is an *aorist passive participle*. Participles are often translated “-ing.” Hence, “being...” The passive voice simply means that he was being acted upon rather than doing the acting. For example, in **John 3:23** Jesus is baptizing (this is the active voice). But earlier, Jesus was baptized (passive voice; **Mark 1:9**). In our text, Jesus is being

⁷ “What Do Americans Believe About Jesus? 5 Popular Beliefs,” *Barna* (April 1, 2015), <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/714-what-do-americans-believe-about-jesus-5-popular-beliefs#.VpkxKJMrJGw>, last accessed 1-15, 2016.

made perfect. What does this mean?

The word (*teleios*) has both a **temporal** (time) connotation as well as a **moral** one. So it can mean that something has been finished, come to completion, or been fulfilled. But in this context, it also has the moral component added. A parallel would be in the LXX of **Deut 18:13**, “**You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.**” Hence, Jesus is said to be without sin in the previous chapter.

Importantly, this passive voice doesn't imply that he had sin and somehow was finally made to be without sin (and as such was being “made” perfect). Christians will one day be like this, but not because of anything intrinsic in us. Rather, it is because those with faith are put “in Christ” the Perfect One who has made atonement for our sins, the Father has forgiven us for Christ's sake, and the Spirit has sanctified us fully. But to be made morally perfect in the sense we are talking about with Jesus does not in any way assume previous sin. Rather, **it refers to the time after he has been tempted in every way that we are, but without sin.**

His Humiliation (No Elitism Here)

Second, *the way he was being made perfect* allows Jesus to

sympathize better with us than the High Priest could. During his life, Jesus was susceptible to all of our weaknesses and temptations. Elites try to avoid such things. This was not true merely at his temptation in the wilderness, but throughout his life. The ultimate question was would he go to the cross in obedience or would he forsake that humiliation because it was too difficult to bear and because he was God? Thus it says, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (vs. 8).

In taking on our human nature, although in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Php 2:6-7). Hence, he had to learn what it meant to suffer. This is why Philippians 2 and its great hymn of Christ continues the same way Hebrews does, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (7). It was in the going through the testing as a man, as one of us, that Jesus learned obedience and was being made perfect.

How much better then is Jesus than even the great high priests of old? One good thing did come from the sin of the

high priest. Because he came from among the people and because he was himself sinful, the high priest “**can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness**” (5:2). When Nadab and Abihu, his oldest sons were destroyed before the LORD, can you imagine what was going through Aaron’s mind? He had just been welcomed, he and his family, into the holy place where God dwelt. No sooner had they been welcomed, then God put two of them to death for sinning against him. It says, “**Aaron held his peace**” (Lev 10:3). He was probably incredibly angry, probably at his sons, perhaps at the LORD. But he was wise and said nothing, lest he too should die. But through it all, he learned the valuable lesson of what it means to be a sinner before a holy God.

Aaron was gifted. Aaron was exalted. But **Aaron was a sinner**, and as such he was able to deal gently with the people. Although, when one thinks of his life, perhaps he dealt *too* gently with them at times. He gave into them! One thinks of **the Golden Calf incident** where he leads the people into a great sin. But at least he was one of them. At least when they approached him he didn’t have this holier-than-thou attitude toward them. At least he understood that God

had to deal gently with him and his own family if they were to survive. And surely this would have made the tabernacle a place you actually wanted to go in the days of Moses. So they could identify with us because they are themselves sinful. Their “weakness” is part-and-parcel of being sinful.

But Jesus—and this is the point of the chiasm in contrasting the two—also became weak. He didn’t sin, but he did need to be tempted in order to sympathize with you, to be gentle to ignorant and wayward people. But his sympathy is greater precisely because he is *without* sin. This is the [difference](#). Yet, his own making it to the end without sin was done in the crucible of fire and testing. This is no elite deity who makes atonement knowing nothing of what it even means to be one of us, costing himself nothing. Jesus is no Hollywood actor taking up the cause of poor pitiful helpless people while he sits in a mansion totally removed from our lives. This is Jesus Christ *Theanthropos*—the God-man—who became one of us in his humiliation and suffering and temptation. This is Jesus who had no place to lay his head.

Part of his humiliation is seen in his supplication or prayers to the Father. It says in [vs. 7](#), “[In the days of his flesh,](#)

Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.” What does it mean that “**God heard him?**” Calvin says there was a double-fulfillment of this. I think he is right. “**Christ was heard from that which he feared, so that he was not overwhelmed by his evils or swallowed up by death.**”⁸ In other words, God preserved him through to the end, so that he would do it even though he didn’t want to. This is truly amazing, because it means he didn’t get the kind of deliverance his flesh wanted. Yet he still relied on his Father.

This has to refer to his ultimate passion the night he was betrayed. “**Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me**” (**Matt 26:42; Luke 22:42**) and also to another, “**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**” (**Matt 27:46**). Our Lord wept tears, as it were, of blood. Listen to Calvin’s beautiful words of application, “**Whenever our evils press upon us and overwhelm us, we may call to mind the Son of God who laboured under the same; and since he has gone before us there is no reason for us to faint.**”⁹ This is part of the reason

⁸ John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 122.

⁹ Ibid.

Jesus had to die. He had to know what it was like to be us in every way, but without sin. You don't want a high priest like Annas or Caiaphus, or even Aaron. You want Jesus who offers the perfect sacrifice because he himself is perfect, yet can also sympathize with you in your own weakness. You want a high priest who understands death itself because he has undergone it, but has become victorious over it in resurrection. You want a high priest who is alive after this, not dead. He knows and understands everything you go through.

When you cry out to God, you are to know that Jesus cried out to God. When you feel like you shouldn't cry out to God, you are to remember that Jesus did cry out to God. When you feel like God isn't going to hear you, you are to remember that he heard Jesus. When circumstances tell you the opposite of what others do, which is that when God hears he gives great relief from all of our woes, you are to remember that God heard his prayers and allowed Jesus to make it through to his death without sinning. He did not deliver him from death, but he gave him the grace to go through to his death without sinning. This has great implications for us in the lives that we struggle through here

and now.

Yet, the second part that Calvin says is just as important. “He then obtained what he prayed for, when he came forth a conqueror from the pains of death, when he was sustained by the saving hand of the Father, when after a short conflict he gained a glorious victory over Satan, sin, and hell.”¹⁰ It isn’t just that the Father gave his Son the ability to make it through all of this without sinning. As tremendous as that was, and in a sense this was answered prayer, God took him not only through death, but into life in the age to come by raising him from the dead. At the cross, Jesus gained the victory over all that holds us captive. God heard him, and God will hear all in Christ who cry out to him. Though he slay us, yet shall we hope in him. Though we die, yet shall we then live.

His Appointment

This is a nice way to transition into the center of the chiasm. Christ’s sacrifice is better because he was sinless. Yet he can still sympathize with us because he suffered and died yet was raised from the dead and is alive to now sympathize.

¹⁰ Ibid., 123.

But all of this is made possible because he was called by God to this position. If God doesn't call him, then none of this happens for us.

Remember how it said that every high priest is chosen from among men. This is now the flip side. While among men, the high priest was called by God. The point of this is that if he had called himself to the job, God wouldn't have listened to him, no matter how good he was. To speak as an intercessor like this, one must have the command and blessing of God himself.

There was a movie made about 20 years ago called *The Apostle*. It starred **Robert Duval** who also wrote, directed, produced, and financed the movie. It was in a way his artistic masterpiece presented to Hollywood. It tells the fascinating story of a very flawed man named "Sunny" Dewey, a man who supposedly received "a calling from God" in elementary school. It is very apparent that this guy is looking for how to make his calling sure, but he is a deeply sinful kind of a guy and no one likes him. Somewhere along the line, since no one wants him, he baptizes and anoints himself and renames himself "Apostle E.F." From there he gains a following.

Was he really called by God, or did he call himself? Such is the strange question facing us in Sunny's Pentecostal confusion, and the movie plays out its answer the rest of the way. When I saw it many years ago I couldn't help thinking, this dude called himself. He wasn't called by God. And so it is with so many religious people today. But that wasn't true even of the most elitist of high priests. As long as they followed the law to the letter on the lineage and other necessary things, they could add the elitism all they wanted. Because at the end of the day, he still had the blessing of God.

Again, this began with Aaron. Throughout the Law (**Ex 28:1; Lev 8:2; Num 3:3**; etc.) God commands “**Aaron and his sons**” to become the priests. God did this. Not Moses. Not Aaron. One time, **Korah** the cousin of these two men was so upset by what he considered to be a self-anointing, that he said, “**You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?**” (**Num 16:3**). But Moses wasn't lying about this. Korah should have known that he was telling the truth by the miracles, but instead he learned the hard way through even more miracles where God proved

that his hand was on Aaron, not Korah. Korah and his family died in the rebellion and the whole nation learned what it meant to truly be called by God.

So it is with Jesus. He was not called by himself. He did not “exalt himself to be made a high priest” (Heb 5:5). But he was appointed by him who said, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you” and again, “You are a priest forever [hence the transition into this topic from the previous that ended with the resurrection], after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:5-6). There are two quotes here. The first is from Psalm 2, which has already been cited (Heb 1:2, 5). It refers to Jesus as the “Son” of God. This is where the idea that he is “begotten” from the Father is found. Though he has already existed, still he was begotten. Hence, eternal begotten Son. It is curious that this is used in conjunction with a second Psalm, Psalm 110 to prove that Jesus was called by God and made a high priest.

We can look at this calling from the point of view of the OT and the NT. As for the OT, we can think of Psalm 110:1, probably the most often quoted verse in the NT.¹¹

¹¹ Cf. Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; Rom 8:34; 1Co 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 10:13, 12:2.

Our quote comes from vs. 4 and is also quoted often in the NT, so it is very relevant to do this.¹² Jesus tells the Pharisees that vs. 1 has three persons in it: David, Yahweh, and David's Lord (Adonai). Jesus says that he is Adonai and that the Father (in this verse) is Yahweh. This is the context into which it is then sworn, not to David, but to Adonai (the Lord) that he is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (again, Melchizedek is that shadowy figure from Genesis 14 and we will look at him in much more detail when we come to Hebrews 7).

The point of Melchizedek here is that there existed in the OT a priesthood of Yahweh that predated the priesthood of Aaron. Jesus' priesthood is in line with this earlier priesthood of Melchizedek. God swears this to the Son in Psalm 110. The Psalm 2 citation right next to this one is interesting because in Psalm 2 God swears something else to his Son. I set my Son on my Holy Hill (Ps 2:6). And again, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you" (2:7). To put it another way, if God is swearing to Jesus in the Psalms, then it means that Jesus the Son of God existed in the OT. Exactly what David said in Psalm 110:1. Exactly what Jesus

¹² Cf. John 12:34; Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21).

told the Pharisees who were incredulous at this. David bows down before Christ in Psalm 110, because he knows what Hebrews knows here. Jesus has a greater priesthood.

All of that is rather mind-blowing to say the least. Hebrews actually calls this “hard to explain” (5:11), so don’t worry if you get lost. More will be said later. But we can move it into the realm of the NT as well. When was Jesus made a high priest? The answer comes in stages. It was sworn in the OT (indeed, if he is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world [Rev 13:8 NIV], this priesthood was sworn before time itself). Yet, Jesus became a high priest at a point in time in his fleshly life on earth. It was a time when the Father was heard by those around him, one of the few in all of history, but very reminiscent of Psalm 2 and 110. Listen to the similarity. “Behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (Matt 3:17; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-34).

When did this take place? It took place at Jesus’ baptism.¹³ What was Jesus’ baptism? Many miss this. It is his ordination into the high priesthood. Consider these facts:

¹³ And again at the transfiguration.

1. A priest had to be washed in water at his ordination (**Ex 29:4**).
2. A priest could not begin ministry until age 30 (**Num 4:3; 47**).
3. A priest (especially the High Priest) had to be called of God as was Aaron (**Ex 28:1**).
4. A priest had to be washed by one already a priest (**Ex 29:9; Num 25:13**).
5. A priest had to be without defect in several special ways (**Lev 21:16-23**).
6. A priest had to be a male (**Num 3:15**).
7. A priest began his ministry immediately after the ordination ceremony was completed (**Ex 29:1**).
8. A priest had to be descended from Aaron (**Ex 28:1**).

Now consider this:

1. Jesus was baptized (**Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21; John 1:31-32**).
2. Jesus was 30 years old at his baptism, the moment prior to the beginning of his ministry (**Luke 3:23**).
3. Jesus was called directly by God at his baptism (**Heb 5:4-10**; cf. **Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22**).
4. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, a Levitical priest in the line of Aaron (**Luke 1:5, 13**).
5. Jesus was without spot or blemish (**Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 1:19**; cf. **Matt 3:14**).
6. Jesus was a male (**Matt 1:21**).
7. Jesus begins his ministry immediately after his baptism (**Luke 4:18ff**).
9. Jesus' "genealogy" stems from Melchizedek, the High Priest of [Jeru]Salem (**Heb 7:11**; cf. **Ps 110:4**).¹⁴

¹⁴ See Douglas Van Dorn, *Waters of Creation: A Biblical-Theological Study of Baptism* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation, 2009), 7-8.

There are reasons the Father swears to make Jesus a high priest and one of only two times that the Father speaks in the NT is at Jesus' baptism. Consider this type in the Day of Atonement, “He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on” (Lev 16:4). Yes, Jesus was consecrated a high priest at his baptism. Most people have no idea that this was going on, because they just stop at thinking that somehow Jesus was being baptized for us. But he was actually being baptized *as one of us for us*—that is as a man into the priesthood so that he could deal with sin in his flesh. And this becomes the central feature of our chiasm.

His intercessory prayers, even for himself (Heb 4:7) were as our High Priest. His learning obedience through suffering so that he could sympathize for us was as our High Priest. His being made perfect was as our High Priest. His sacrifice for our sins to become the “source of our salvation” was as our high priest. This again is why he did it. “Being

made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9).

But salvation is not automatic. Jesus doesn’t save every single person that ever lived. Part of what is going on here is that in sending the Son to be Priest, he is also sending him to be King (just like Melchizedek was). And in doing so, fealty must be avowed to this king. Allegiance must be sworn. Obedience must be rendered. It isn’t enough to believe that Jesus existed. “eternal salvation” comes, in the verse, to all who “obey him.” Obedience begins not with a bunch of good works that you do to make him happy, but with trust and faith that he is who he says he is. And this faith is the opposite of works. It is rested, not working. It is comfort, not condemnation.

“What must we do?” they asked Peter. Believe and be baptized, he replied. Baptism is the first act of obedience after confessing Christ before the world. In fact, it is confessing Christ before the world, and like Jesus, it is a consecration into the priesthood of the believer, so that you may then begin obey Christ with your life through faith. If you have not trusted, confessed Christ, and been baptized, then you are not in obedience to Christ because you are not

in Christ and are therefore not saved. Jesus is not your High Priest. Yet he is calling you now through his word.

As you think on these things know this. Jesus—the Son of God, was anything but elitist. Instead, he was just like us in every way. Indeed, probably more so, as he was the Suffering Servant of whom there was nothing outward that we should be attracted to him. He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God for us. Yet, he is God. Therefore, the application to you all is that you are to run to your High Priest because he cares for you. Pray to your High Priest because he understands you. Go through your High Priest because he intercedes for you. He is your advocate and he stands on high ever living to make intercession. Those who go to him he will never cast away.